

Pre-Deployment Battlemind For Spouse/Couples

***(Helping You and Your Family
Prepare for Deployments)***

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Terminal Learning Objective

- In a classroom environment, given a group of military spouses or a group of spouses and Warriors (*couples*), describe the effects of military deployments and separation on the Family and the actions spouses and Warriors can take to manage and/or minimize the impact of the deployment. IAW the Battlemind principles and concepts discussed during this block of instruction.

The Nature of Military Life

- Military life can be a difficult:
 - Frequent military deployments
 - Frequent training exercises
 - Long duty days
 - Weekend duty
 - Frequent military moves (PCSs)
 - Fear of death and/or serious injury
 - Distance from extended Family
 - Financial strain
 - Family separations

The Nature of Military Life

- Military life does have benefits:
 - Financial stability; retirement benefits
 - Health care
 - Community and sense of belonging
 - Education and job training
 - Overseas assignments
 - Part of a tradition
 - Resilient Families
 - Pride and patriotism

Battlemind for Spouses/Couples

- Battlemind for Spouses/Couples is the ability to face deployments with resilience and strength, allowing easier separations and smoother reunions.
- Key components include:
 - Independence: *the capability of having a fulfilling and meaningful life as part of an Army-centric Family*
 - Resiliency: *The ability to overcome setbacks and obstacles and to maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity*



Deployments and separations can be a positive growth experience for you and your Family; however, some issues may arise that could negatively affect your or your Family's well-being.

■ Working on this set of Battlemind skills throughout the military deployment-cycle will help increase your and your Family's resiliency.

- ✓ Bonds (*Social Support*)
- ✓ Adding/Subtracting Family Roles
- ✓ Taking Control
- ✓ Talking it Out
- ✓ Loyalty and Commitment
- ✓ Emotional Balance
- ✓ Mental Health and Readiness
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Navigating the Army System
- ✓ Denial of Self (*Self-Sacrifice*)

Bonds (Social Support)

During Combat deployments: Warriors will often have fellow Warriors as their primary source of social support

At Home: Spouses may develop new friends, strengthen friendships, become more involved in the Army community and participate in new

Potential Concerns: During a deployment, Spouses and Warriors will have different sources of social support which can weaken marital relationships. Decreased shared experiences can hinder meaningful communication.

Bonds (Social Support)

Actions Spouses Can Take: Know that your Warrior cannot be your sole source of support while deployed. Develop and maintain a dependable support system. Keep your Warrior informed of changes in your friendships and activities. If you leave the area, stay in touch with your FRG and

Actions Warriors Can Take: As much as possible, provide emotional support to your spouse through letters, emails, phone calls, and other means of communication. Plan how you will do this before you deploy. Actively support your spouse's plans to develop a strong support system.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

During Combat deployments: Warriors Are removed from the daily lives of their Families and miss Family events (anniversaries, births

At Home: Spouses will perform roles that might otherwise be shared.

Potential Concerns: Spouses might feel overwhelmed or unprepared for the additional roles that need to be taken on. Warriors may feel left out.

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

Actions Spouses Can Take: Discuss with your Warrior all of the roles that you will have to assume before the deployment. Make the transition while your Warrior is still home.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Provide your spouse with the necessary tools and resources (power(s) of attorney, account numbers and passwords, important documents, contact numbers, etc.), to perform all of the Family's roles before you deploy.

Taking Control

During Combat deployments: Warriors can't be in control of what is going on at home.

At Home: Spouses are the head of the household.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may resent their Warrior's attempts to micromanage or completely detach from the household while deployed. Spouses and Warriors may disagree on the details of the Family's priorities. Conflicts may arise over how money is managed during the deployment.

Taking Control

Actions Spouses Can Take: Pace yourself and only take on essential tasks and responsibilities. Keep your Warrior up-to-date on any unplanned expenses that occur during the deployment.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Trust and encourage your spouse to set priorities. Encourage and help your spouse to do what they need to do to keep the Family going. Understand that changes will likely occur. Don't micromanage the household while you are deployed.

Talking it Out

During Combat deployments: Warriors work long hours, nearly every day, with very little downtime and many have limited access to phone or email.

At Home: Spouses are also only able to share a limited amount of what occurs during the

Potential Concerns: Warriors may not share their feelings or experiences while they are deployed because they do not want Spouses to worry. Also, they may not have time to fully engage in the conversation or they are not ready to talk. Because communication is limited, the likelihood of rumors spreading increases.

Talking it Out

Actions Spouses Can Take: Talk with others about how the deployment is affecting you. Make sure your children have a chance to keep in touch with your Warrior as well. Be patient and understand that your Warrior may not share details of what they are going through or understand what you are experiencing.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Don't expect your spouse to understand what it is like in a combat environment unless you share your experiences. Recognize that your spouse and children will have a deployment story to share as well. Explain to your children why and for how long you will be gone.

Loyalty and Commitment

During Combat deployments: Warriors need to know their spouses will remain committed and be there for them when they return.

At Home: Spouses need to know their Warriors will be committed during the deployment.

Potential Concerns: Both spouses and Warriors may doubt how well they can handle being separated for such a long time. Also, spouses and Warriors may have concerns about mistrust, jealousy and commitment.

Loyalty and Commitment

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Warrior how much you miss them and how happy you will be when they return. Find ways to stay connected; try poems, letters, tapes, gifts, videos, etc.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Tell your spouse you love and appreciate them. Try to stay connected with your spouse in any way you can. Be creative!

Emotional Balance

During Combat deployments: Warriors are trained to control their emotions in order to be successful

At Home: Spouses manage individual and Family emotional well-being with less emotional support

Potential Concerns: Warriors may begin to detach from the Family prior to deploying, which can lead spouses and children to become anxious, angry or worried about decreased emotional intimacy. Couples and children may argue more as the deployment nears. Warriors may also seem distant during mid-tour leave.

Emotional Balance

Actions Spouses Can Take: Be patient. Emotional detachment can be common in Warriors preparing for combat and during deployment (including mid-tour leave). Be aware that arguments often occur as Families try to cope with a pending deployment.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Understand that you may be more easily frustrated or feel detached as the deployment nears. Stay as involved as possible with your Family before you leave. Let your spouse and children know that you care and are concerned about them while you are deployed.

Mental Health and Readiness

During Combat deployments: Warriors have experiences that may affect their mental health.

At Home: Spouses maintain individual and Family mental well-being.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may experience difficulty adjusting to Warriors being away, becoming anxious, depressed, or angry with their Warrior or the Army. Children may be depressed or upset about the deployment as well. Spouses and children may be concerned about how the deployment will be or is affecting their Warrior.

Mental Health and Readiness

Actions Spouses Can Take: Recognize that you and your children may need mental health assistance to better cope with the deployment. Know what mental health resources are available for you and your Family.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Monitor your own well-being. There are many ways to seek help while you are deployed, if it is needed, including unit Chaplains, battalion aid stations, mental health professionals, and Combat Stress Control (CSC) professionals.

Independence

During Combat deployments: Warriors make decisions that revolve around their deployment and are less available to participate in household

At Home: Spouses function alone or as a single parent by making household decisions with less input from their Warriors.

Potential Concerns: Some of the decisions that spouses make may not be agreed upon by their Warriors. Spouses may be reluctant to make independent decisions during the deployment.

Independence

Actions Spouses Can Take: Seek your Warrior's input on major decisions, but be ready to make most decisions on your own.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Respect and appreciate your spouse's independence. It is essential for your spouse to make decisions in your absence.

Navigating the Army System

During Combat deployments: Warriors follow rules and regulations.

At Home: Spouses navigate the Army environment, using available resources, in order to better integrate into the military community.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may become angry and resentful for having to deal with a complicated, bureaucratic organization (TRICARE, DEERS, etc.). Perceived lack of information or help from a Warrior's unit or military agencies may also cause frustration.

Navigating the Army System

Actions Spouses Can Take: Learn the Army system by asking questions. Be patient, it takes time. Anticipate changes that will occur during the deployment (such as starting a new school) and know how to get through them without your Warrior's presence. Be prepared to solve many problems on

Actions Warriors Can Take: Prepare your spouse as much as possible prior to your deployment by sharing all information you have about Army services and making sure they have all needed power(s) of attorney. Show your spouse the local service locations. Help your spouse navigate the system.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

During Combat deployments: Warriors Literally put their lives on the line for their fellow Warriors in the service of their country.

At Home: Spouses often sacrifice their own needs and desires (careers, educational goals, proximity to Family and friends, etc.) by placing their needs

Potential Concerns: Spouses and Warriors alike may feel that they are sacrificing a lot and are not being fully appreciated.

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

Actions Spouses Can Take: Tell your Warrior that you appreciate their sacrifices and that you recognize that being a Warrior is difficult.

Actions Warriors Can Take: Be aware that you are not the only one making sacrifices. Show your spouse how much you appreciate their hard work and encourage them to pursue his/her own interests.

Cues You Might Need Help

- If any of the following are severe, persistent or interfere with your daily life:
 - Feeling depressed and down
 - Isolating yourself or withdrawing from important relationships
 - Feeling angry, tense, hostile, irritable and/or resentful
 - Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
 - Significant appetite changes
 - Not finding fun in things previously enjoyed
 - Using over-the-counter medications, illegal drugs or alcohol to cope
 - Taking out frustrations on others
 - Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent or actions
 - Family, coworkers, or friends tell you that you need help

Cues Children Might Need Help

- Look for *changes* in the child's normal behaviors and problems that persist:
 - Irritability and problems controlling his/her temper
 - Getting into fights, hitting, biting, and/or kicking
 - Having problems paying attention or sitting still
 - Withdrawing from friends and becoming a loner at school or home
 - Being unhappy, sad or depressed
 - Academic problems
 - School personnel, friends, or others tell you that your child needs help

Mental (Behavioral) Health Resources for Families

- Military Chaplain or civilian religious personnel
- Mental (Behavioral) Health services
- Army/Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647
- or www.MilitaryOneSource.com
- Army Community Services (ACS)
- Social Work Services (SWS)
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- Child Youth Services (CYS)
- New Parent Support Program (NPSP)
- School counselor



A faded, grayscale background image of two soldiers in combat gear, one in the foreground and one in the background, both holding rifles.

What are your questions?